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Ten reasons why progressives can't relax

1. Health care

Clinton's position on health care bounced around in the early months of the campaign, finally settling on a policy that would leave the health insurance industry largely unscathed.

As long-time national health system advocate Dr. Jerry Liebman has noted, America has a health system that nobody wanted. It has simply grown on top of itself out of an endless series of political compromises. Clinton's plan continues the tradition. Clinton set out to devise a scheme that would not provoke excessive opposition from the insurance industry. In fact, as the *New York Times* pointed out, his proposal will "generate substantial new business for private health insurance companies."

Although a majority of the American people say they'd like something along the lines of Canada's real national health insurance, Clinton and the media act as though such an option doesn't exist. Instead we are presented with yet another jury rig.

Since the health insurance industry is a major contributor to the failure of our health system, nurturing it does not seem an ideal initial premise for health reform. There are, in fact, few public or private institutions as inefficient. We currently spend about $200 billion -- or 25% of all health expenditures -- just to cover administrative costs. Canada's administrative costs run about 10% of its total health program. Reducing administrative costs to Canada's level would produce about $120 billion to use for real health care, but apparently health insurance is exempted from Clinton's desire to increase American productivity.

The Clinton plan raises a number of other issues:

- Who is going to do the managing in his as yet fuzzy promises of "managed care?"
- What really will happen when cost "targets" are not met?
- Why will Clinton's version of "managed care" work any better than that in which the industry already claims it engages?
- To what end will the management strive? To save costs, to protect industry profits or to provide the best health care to the patient?
- Why are patients and doctors better off with insurance companies rather than government in charge? Does not the current spate of horror stories about the business practices and financial stability of some of the largest insurance companies suggest otherwise?

There is also the problem of continuing the link between health insurance and employment under the Clinton plan. Adding a tax to employee wages for health benefits means another drag on job creation. Such an excise would also further dampen the enthusiasm of anyone to go into business in the first place and be one more encouragment to move a business to another country. Any sound insurance plan must break the shackle between health coverage and employment.

One should not be surprised at the Clinton policy. Max Brantley, columnist for the *Arkansas Times,* notes that "Blue Cross owns Arkansas, and [Clinton] never did much to fight them." The organizer of a Clinton advisory group on health care was Bruce Fried, a lobbyist for the Wexler Group, whose clients include the Health Insurance

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Association of America. The Boggs law firm, ultra insiders of the Clinton gig, represent New York and Mutual Life.

There may, however, be some time to discuss these matters. Although Clinton talked on the campaign trail of early implementation of his health plan, NBC's Andrea Mitchell reported on July 20, "Later, on his bus, Clinton acknowledged something he does not say in his stump speech -- that his health plan would have to be phased in over several years."

The obvious alternative -- despite the media blackout on the subject -- is national health insurance. And it is on this ground that progressives could well make their first stand against the easy virtue of a Clinton administration.

2. Jobs

Here is what Clinton said in an interview in *Rolling Stone* this fall: "We are going to have to reconcile ourselves not to being a hard-work, low-wage country but to having a higher percentage of people at lower wage levels."

Clinton understands this sort of economy. It is why businesses flocked to Arkansas. Clinton bragged of a 19% increase in jobs there, but what he didn't add was that the average manufacturing wage in his state puts Arkansas 48th in nation. This is also where, *The Nation* recently reported, the much-touted Arkansas Industrial Development Commission bragged to prospective corporations of the state's anti-union climate and gave one company a $300,000 loan guarantee so it could build up inventory against a possible UAW strike.

There are intimations that the Clintonistas not only aren't bothered by a two-tiered economy -- a well-paid elite supported by low-paid manufacturing and service workers -- but consider it inevitable in view of competitive pressures from abroad.

This may be why Clinton can go along with a free trade agreement as unfavorable to American workers as NAFTA. After an initial period, in which a quarter of a million to 900,000 jobs will be lost in the US, the theory is that Mexican wages will rise and American wages will sink in what has been called "downward harmonization" and we will have a "level playing field" and be competitive once more.

If this scenario comes to fruition, you may not hear politicians promising all sort of favors to the middle class. There may not be one.

2. The line-item veto

While Foley appears to have modified Clinton's desire for a full line-item veto, any such move further weakens tripartite government and is another victory for the imperial presidency. What's amazing about this is that the congressional leadership has already lost sight of the fact that arch conservatives periodically win the White House, and when they do, the line-item tool they hand Clinton as a housewarming gift will still be very much in place. This is one of the times that Senator Robert Byrd is absolutely right and deserves all the support he can get. Whatever its faults, a strong Congress is one of our best defenses against further authoritarianism in this country.

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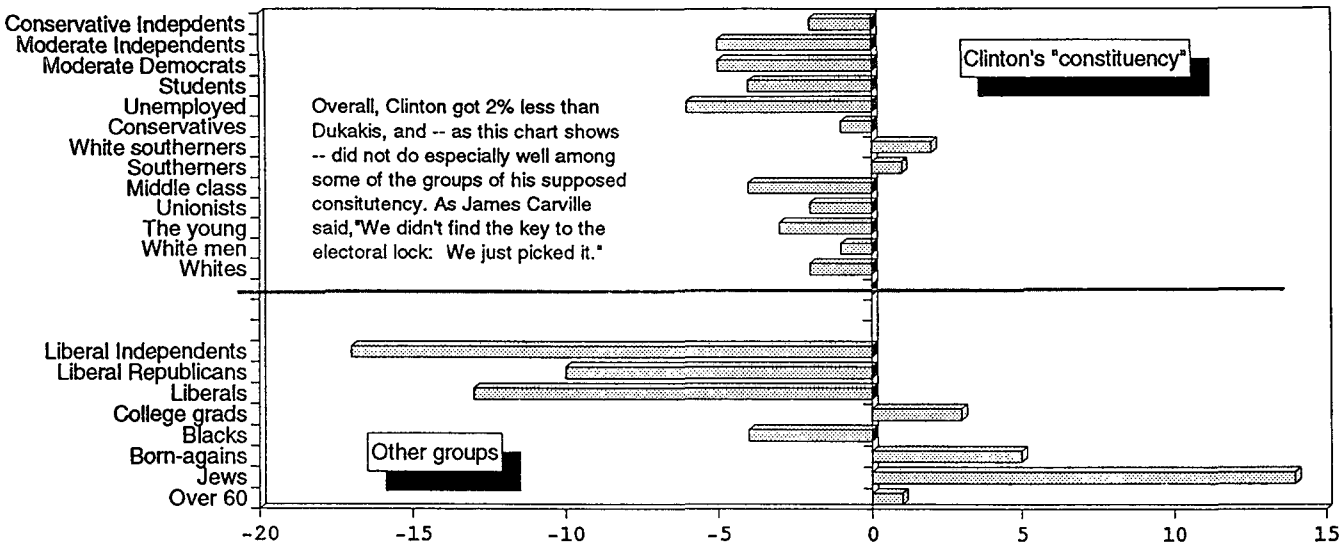
CLINTON VS DUKAKIS: WHERE WAS THE BEEF?



Clinton's percentage point gain or loss compared with Dukakis. Based on New York Times exit polls.

3. *Education*

Clinton has proposed a program for funding college costs much along the lines advocated by the *Review* among others. The idea is simple: College loans are paid back based on one's income over a period of years. Since college graduates pay much higher taxes than those who don't go to college, it's a wonderful investment for the country.

The weakest part of the proposal is that which would forgive loans in return for a short period of community service. The numbers and the guidelines should be looked at closely to make sure that it isn't, as it now appears, a subsidized sinecure for prospective members of America's economic elite at the expense of those who don't make the college cut.

In aggregate there is a storng whiff of a two-tiered economy, of winners and losers, about Clinton's education proposals. The idea of a national apprenticeship program, for example, has appeal, but who decides who is assigned to it? Are we talking about national tracking, as well as the national standards and national examinations that Clinton wants which would further centralize education for no good purpose.

Clinton has already shown himself not adverse to creating two classes of students. He argued in Arkansas that the driver's licences of students who failed to maintain a C average should be revoked.

4. *Welfare reform*

Real welfare reform would be raising welfare payments to nearer the poverty level. Real welfare reform would be a jobs program large enough to make welfare less necessary. Real welfare reform would be instituting something along the lines of the pay vouchers advocated by the much-maligned Jerry Brown in order to ease the transition from dependency to employment. Real welfare reform would be a shorter work week to open up new jobs. Instead Clinton has pandered to the worst stereotypes and myths about welfare.

It is concerning welfare that Clinton has turned the most cynical, aggressively adopting the code language of the racial and economic neo-segregationists. He frequently speaks of "responsibility," a term he never uses when referring to parasitical businesses or his major campaign funders. When a citizen proposed during an October 26 CBS *This Morning* broadcast, that the standard should be "if you don't work, you don't eat," Clinton replied, "I agree with you. If people don't work, they shouldn't eat."

This is probably the first time a candidate of either party has suggested starvation as a form of welfare reform, but then Clinton may just be kidding us again. In fact, his touted Arkansas "Project Success" has not put all those who could work off welfare after two years as he has claimed. The *New Republic* found that out of 27,000 welfare recipients, only 194 were actually engaged in community service. Only 4000 were even participating in the program and 78% were protected by education and job search programs.

On the other hand, maybe he's not kidding. *Harper's* recently uncovered an Arkansas welfare questionnaire that asked women recipients, among other things, about their sexual partners.

5. *Foreign affairs*

Although foreign affairs was one of the orphan issues of the campaign, and Clinton's plans are ill-formed or ill-stated at best, it is worth noting that Clinton went to

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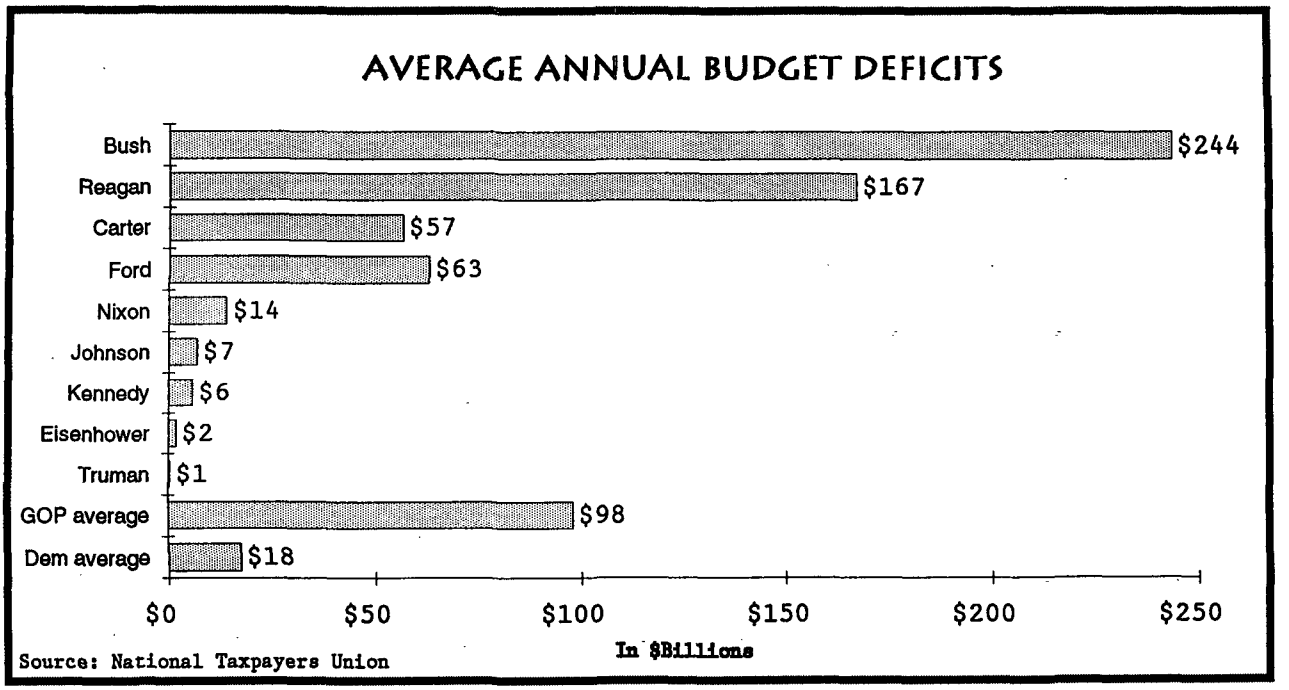

Florida to seek campaign contributions and support from some of the most reactionary of the Cuban crowd and announced his support for the so-called Cuban Democracy Act, legislation that puts draconian restrictions on trade with Cuba for no good reason other than to appease right-wing Cubans. Bush had resisted the bill until Clinton outflanked him to the right, at which point he signed the measure. Under the bill, any ship that stops in Cuba is banned from American ports for six months, economic aid is prohibited to any country that bolsters Cuba's economy and prevents trade there by foreign subsidiaries of American companies.

This policy, Bill Clinton's seminal adventure into foreign affairs, was overwhelmingly criticized by the UN General Assembly, which also called for the end of the 30-year embargo against Cuba. Nonetheless, the myth that Cuba holds a special place in the pantheon of authoritarian regimes will undoubtedly continue under a Clinton administration anxious to pander to Batista wannabes in Miami.

The other known blind spot in Clinton's foreign views is Israel. He favors making Jerusalem that country's capital, which could be good for major world conflict all by itself. Clinton also opposes the creation of an independent Palestinian state. Gore, a long time aficionado of the Israeli right, will undoubtedly have a lot to say in these matters. One top lobbyist for Israel has already lost his job after being caught bragging on tape about how his organization had the Clinton administration wired.

6. Defense

Clinton's plans here tend toward the typically mushy. He does promise to reduce US troops in Europe and cut the overall budget. But he continues to support dubious projects like the Osprey and the Seawolf and has not given up completely on Star Wars. Further, he wants it clear that he's no more inclined towards what Bush called that "crazy nuclear freeze crowd" than his predecessors. In one of his speeches last summer he declared: "There are those, some in my party, who see defense cuts as largely a piggy bank to fund domestic wish lists, with our defense structures and missions as a mere after-thought rather than a starting premise. This policy would ... weaken our technological superiority and the quality and morale of our superb personnel."

Belittling a peacetime economy as a "piggybank" for "domestic wish lists" suggests why the Clinton campaign said so little about economic conversion. Without such conversion, with the inevitable increases in the cost of military procurement, and with many defense contractors unfamiliar with any business except cost-plus Pentagon handouts, the prospects for a peace dividend under Clinton appear slim.

7. The deficit and the budget

A few facts help to draw the increasingly difficult distinction between fear of the deficit and the actual deficit itself:

- Since almost the beginning of the Reagan administration the federal deficit has been mounting at an extraordinarily high rate with remarkably little concern from many of the same quarters who now say we must cut the deficit before everything else. By Reagan's third year, the deficit had already climbed to nearly three times the highest figure of the Carter years -- with few cries for austerity.
- Since World War II, Republican administrations

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have added to the deficit at five times the rate of Democratic administrations.

◦ With the single exception of Kennedy, every administration that has more than doubled the average budget deficit of its predecessor has been Republican. Carter has the distinction of being the only post-war president to cut the average deficit.

The deficits are too large and high interest costs do hurt government programs, but there is no verifiable evidence that we are any more in a fiscal crisis than we were five or ten years ago. In fact, nobody knows how much debt we can safely carry. We do know that even a major multi-billion dollar jobs program would add but a percentage point or two to current interest costs and far less, of course, to the total budget. And we do know, as Doug Henwood of the *Left Business Observer* pointed out recently, that American levels of public investment are puny compared to other countries. Henwood calculates that to reach British levels of public investment would take about $100 billion a year; to match the Germans, $200 billion; and $300 billion to catch up with the Japanese. Clinton has proposed $20 billion. Further, there are other ways of balancing a budget than the skinflint approach widely favored today; the best is to get the economy going, and get incomes rising, so people pay more taxes.

Clinton basically has to choose between the deficit Cassandras and economic policies that have, over many decades, proven to work. If he understands that Republican policies tend to lead to higher deficits, he will, for the short-run, ignore the Cassandras and use borrowed money to get the country moving again. The time to worry about the deficit was over the past 12 years and after we clear the current slump. Using the deficit as a reason not to revive America's ability to pay taxes is masochistic to the extreme, not unlike a store that tries to improve its balance sheet by not purchasing goods for its shelves.

There is, however, a swampland of political disingenuousness to wade through to accomplish this, and it is doubtful whether Clinton has the stomach for it. He will get little help from the media, which in such matters tends to run to bankers for advice and worries incessantly about the reaction of "the markets." A typical *Washington Post* analysis recently fretted: "There are pitfalls for Clinton if he goes too far in trying to speed up the economy, however. Already, markets are afraid that he will seek to boost spending but not make a serious effort at reducing the deficit. "

The truth of the matter is that the "markets" don't like Democratic programs and never have, which shows how dumb the markets can be. Given the level of interest rates and inflation, if we can't engage in domestic spending now, there will never be a time we can do so to the satisfaction of these "markets."

It may bring a modicum of courage to the Clinton gang to realize that while the American people do want the deficit cut, according to a recent Greenberg-Lake poll, they also support modest increases in domestic programs. The public would cut defense and intelligence programs $60 billion in one year, or about six times as fast as Clinton has suggested. And they'll take $40 billion in new taxes, suggesting that the money come from corporations, polluters, imports, alcohol and tobacco.

8. Drugs

In what little he had to say on the matter, Clinton attempted to present himself as a hawk in the war on drugs. His indifference to drug-running by the Contra crowd in Arkansas suggests that, once again, what he says and what he does may be quite different. There is some feeling in the anti-drug war movement that Clinton will show sense on issues such as medical marijuana and clean needle exchanges, but will need extremely heavy pressure on drug testing, mandatory minimum sentences, forfeiture laws and other obscenities of the drug war.

9. Industrial policy

It sounds harmless enough, but it is worth remembering that industrial policy wasn't invented by the post-WWII Germans and Japanese, but rather by the fascists of Italy. Fascism places an economy in the hand of oligopolies under the supreme guidance of the state. It is the antithesis of a free market, and differs from socialism in that the corporations are insulated from the public will by not being an accountable part of the government.

The potential pitfalls of moving in this direction are enormous. Once a corporation's interest becomes indivisible from that of the state it becomes a matter of state security to protect that corporation. We have already experienced this phenomenon in the nuclear power and defense industries, which are granted many of the immunities and protections of a military institution. At the present time, government employees can not strike; at what point in the development of an industrial policy will it be considered a threat to the republic to strike against a corporation considered key to our success in "global economic competition?"

Clinton has proposed an "economic security council" to mimic the National Security Council. One need not carry the metaphor far before it is considered one's patriotic duty to support the interests of Mobil, IBM and other multinational corporations.

Of more mundane concern is Clinton's attachment to high technology. Many of the country's most serious problems have little to do with high technology. While high-speed trains are nice, for example, they are mainly nice for people who can afford to ride them. These are the same people who are already the primary beneficiaries of our national transportation policy. It is far more important to improve the generic rail system of the country. Clinton, like his predecessor, appears to have little appreciation for the role that transportation has played in creating the economic and ethnic disparities of the nation. It is not by accident that the federal government heavily subsidizes air travel while the American interstate bus system has

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disintegrated.

One reason for Clinton's emphasis appears to be that he thinks it answers the cries for conversion to a peacetime economy. He apparently intends to direct the attention (and the profits) of the cost-plus folks, who now serve as the pilot fish of the Pentagon whale, towards things they presumably would know how to make.

An article in the *New York Times* noted:

As a peace dividend from the cold' wars end, a minimum of $30 billion over four years is to be taken from the Pentagon's research budget and put into advanced work in areas like robotics, smart roads, biotechnology, machine tools, magnetic-levitation trains, fibre-optic communications and national computer networks.

The beneficiaries of such programs would include many firms that have never had to, and probably could not, survive in a non-protected competitive economy. All they know is how to take the government for everything they can get. They are responsible for the greatest amount of waste and fraud in any industry other than that of the financiers. This is the industry that Clinton plans to protect and subsidize. Like Bush and Reagan, Clinton believes in trickle-down economics; he just wants the trickle to start at a different place.

Of particular note is his scheme to extend the idea of technology centers into a sort of agricultural extension service for industrialists. The potential for scandal and waste in this proposal seems virtually limitless, presenting, for example, the opportunity to emulate the situation in Clark County, Nevada, which has 40 farmers and 13 federal agricultural agents.

Clinton's argument that such centers are needed to increase American productivity waver on a number of grounds. First, the idea that the government is an efficient incubator of ideas and innovations lacks empirical support. Second, these centers have the potential of becoming the equivalent of military bases; God help the politician who tries to close one. And third, as the McKinsey Global Institute pointed out, in a report written by a number of longtime Democrats, the average US factory worker already produces 25% more per hour than a worker in Japan or Germany. In fact, American productivity is one of the main reasons for our chronic unemployment, a problem much more likely to be solved by a shorter work-week than by creating a 170 government-funded feeding troughs for corporate America.

10. If he cared about you he would have called by now

Not during the primaries, nor during the campaign, nor since the election has Bill Clinton shown more than minimal interest in what progressives thought about anything. It is reasonable to regard this as a clue. -- *Sam Smith*

The Canadian conundrum

Thomas S. Martin

On October 26 the voters of Canada, disillusioned with the constitutional manipulations and posturings of their politicians, turned down the latest attempt to salvage their unraveling confederation. The Charlottetown Accord was rejected by a margin of 55 to 42 percent in Québec, though it won in three of the maritime provinces. Ontario was evenly divided. The accord also lost in the western provinces, where native rights are a sensitive topic. In spite of its recognition of Indian and francophone rights, Canadians recognized the Charlottetown deal for what it was: a front for business, a house of cards, and too little, too late.

The outcome of the October referendum could well have sealed the fate of Brian Mulroney and his Progressive-Conservatives. The ruling party is beginning to show the schizophrenic tendencies suggested by its odd name. Mulroney favors decentralization, more native rights, and economic power-sharing for the provinces, but also insists that the confederation should remain whole. In trying to be everything to everybody, he only succeeded in offending the voters. The prime minister is under no illusion about the meaning of this vote: its failure, he said on October 3, "will mean the beginning of the process of dismantling Canada." The results of the October 26 vote are not binding, but there is no doubt that the provincial and national governments will follow the popular decision.

The deconstruction of Canada will not be a simple process -- politically, economically or morally. For every high-sounding claim to freedom and self-determination, there is a corresponding ulterior motive. For every plus, a minus; for every threat a counter-threat. While the breakup of the confederation seems inevitable and in the long run desirable, it must be managed very carefully. A disorderly collapse would leave the Canadians open to ever greater exploitation by the United States, and perhaps even annexation of some provinces. It would wreck the economy and the peerless social welfare system. As always in such cases, the poor and the dispossessed will pay the heaviest price. Without a doubt the environment will suffer, as multinational corporations move in for the

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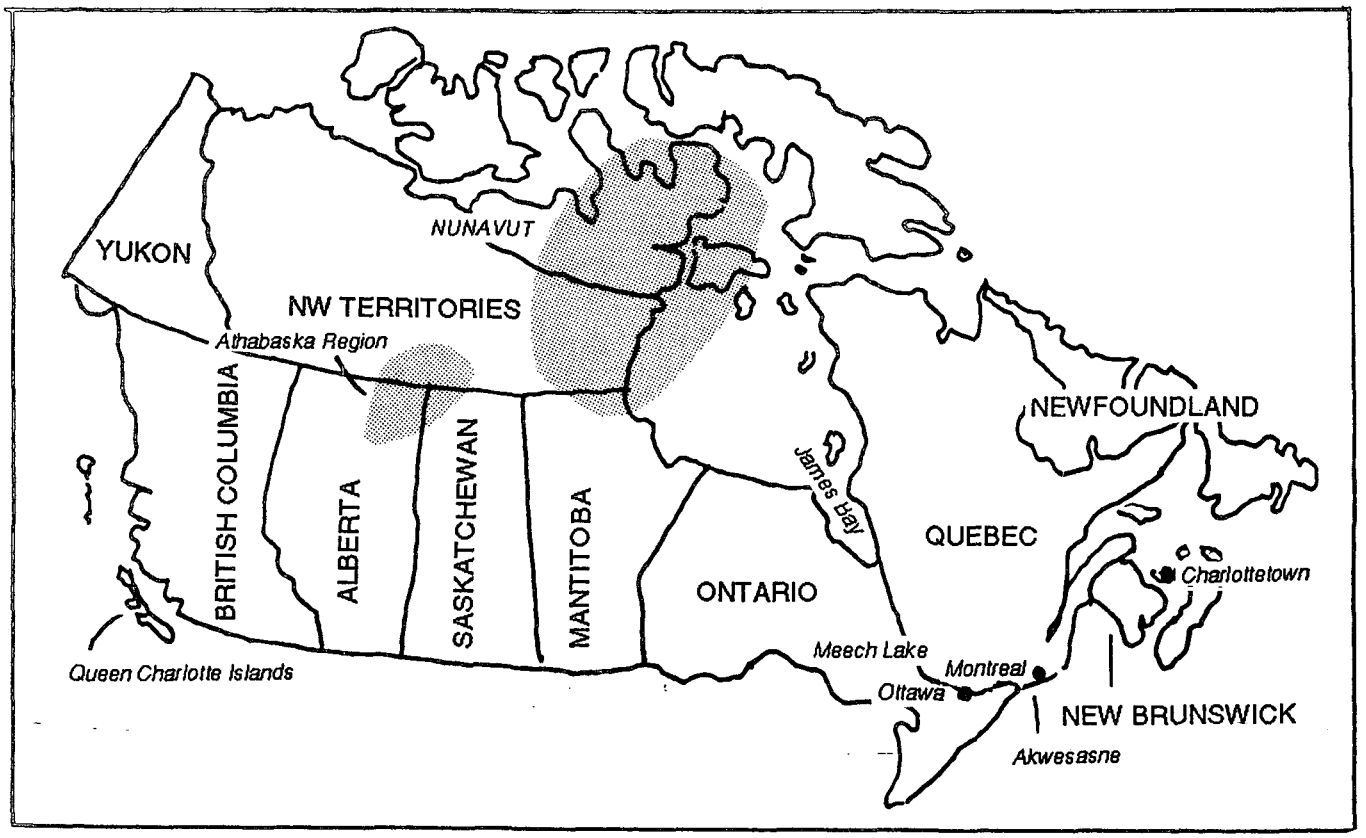

kill. An orderly deconstruction, however, could save Québec from figurative, and the aborigines from literal, extinction. It may encourage the revival of local lifeways and empower people to protect their cultural and ecological heritages. And there is no reason why the best features of the "Canadian" identity should not survive through a loose and non-sovereign association. It is often said that Canada is a nation without a real identity, a collection of leftovers from the American Revolution cobbled together with a far west that has more in common with Montana than with Ontario and a far north that only the aboriginal people could love. Certainly identity is a problem, but all Canadians know what they are not: Americans. In addition, substantial minorities know quite unequivocally what they are. The francophones of Québec are a cohesive ethnic group with a long history and a proven capacity to absorb and assimilate immigrants. Major Indian nations like the Cree and Iroquois have managed to sustain a cultural identity in spite of long neglect and racism. In recent years even the smaller and more isolated tribes have found a powerful new voice through the Assembly of First Nations. In some provinces, the "no" vote was directed against the native people's pretensions to sovereignty: a clear message that it is time for them to go their own way. On the principles of devolution, self-determination and simple human dignity it is tempting to endorse the breakup of Canada without qualification. But a unique array of special conditions dictates caution. Take the case of Québec. It is larger than Texas, with a distinct and lively culture; many of its people do not speak English, and most of the rest pretend they do not. The Québécois never quite got used to British rule, and in this century the declining power of the church and the waning birthrate stirred fears that their culture might be engulfed by the anglophones. More seriously, foreign multinationals began the systematic rape of Québec's forests and mineral resources. A francophone version of the Weather Underground, the Front for the Liberation of Québec, flared briefly in the early seventies; kidnappings and martial law seemed to point toward an armed rebellion. But the radicals faded, as they did in this country. An independence referendum failed in 1980. Still the Parti Québécois (PQ) has been a significant force in Canadian politics for some thirty years, and for a time governed the province. Its longtime leader, René Levesque, died in 1987 at a low point in the party's fortunes, but it has since made a comeback under the guidance of Jacques Parizeau. The francophone population has increasingly seen itself as victimized, and demands for a new dispensation led to the Meech Lake accord.

The agreement would have recognized Québec as a "distinct society" with broad control over language and education; every province would have gained greater control over immigration and economic policy. Québec was the first to ratify. But the approval process bogged down in other provincial legislatures, and eventually failed. Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau condemned Meech Lake, saying melodramatically that "it would be better for Canada if the Meech Lake monster went back and drowned itself in the watery depths from which it should never have raised its hideous head." When the ratification deadline came in June 1990, the premiers of Newfoundland and

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Manitoba were still holding out. Anglophones resented the special privileges promised to Québec, and native peoples objected because Meech Lake did not grant them equivalent status. In fact, it was the vote of one Indian legislator, Elijah Harper, that killed the proposal in Manitoba. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, an anglophone native of Québec, had staked his reputation on the success of Meech Lake. He is still in office today, but just barely.

In the past two years Canadian union has deteriorated markedly. The socialist New Democratic Party, which strongly supports minority rights, has taken power in Ontario, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. A right-wing anglophone Confederation of Regions Party recently elected eight members to the New Brunswick legislature. Mulroney appointed a "Citizens' Forum on Canada's Future" to come up with an acceptable substitute for Meech Lake. Committees, conferences and town meetings were held across the country, all carefully monitored by Ottawa. Out of this unprecedented national soul-search came a new proposal from Mulroney's Progressive-Conservative government, meeting at Charlottetown on Prince Edward Island. Canadians would continue to share citizenship in a loosely federated dominion, under laws that would recognize the diversity and self-determination of every national group. Lavish but apparently sincere promises were made to the aboriginal people: for starters, a vast region of the Northwest Territory was reconstituted as the quasi-autonomous Inuit state of Nunavut. The Senate would be overhauled: members to be elected, not appointed, and no longer counted in proportion to the population of their provinces. Québec, the second most populous province, would be a big loser in the Senate, but would be guaranteed 25% of the seats in the House of Commons and one-third of the Supreme Court justices. Each province would have the option of controlling most of its own finances.

Finally, in keeping with the North American Free Trade Agreement, all provincial trade barriers would be abolished. Trudeau vehemently opposed the reform, charging that it will leave Ottawa "totally impotent," its members of Parliament "eunuchs." Mulroney waffled on setting a date for this nonbinding referendum, but then the Québec legislature passed a controversial law, Bill 150, requiring Premier Robert Bourassa to hold a referendum on sovereignty before October 26. With an eye to that deadline, Mulroney scheduled the vote for that date. Québécois voters saw the constitutional reform as weaker even than Meech Lake, and some recalled the words of separatist leader Jean-Marc Léger decades ago: "To try at the same time for special status and for true federation is like trying to square the circle."

Lurking behind any discussion of Québec's future is the eco-catastrophic James Bay Project, a multi-decade, multi-billion dollar project to harness the water power of dozens of rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. The region affected is as large as England. Besides destroying hundreds of square miles of virgin subarctic forest, Phase I of the project displaced many Cree and Inuit aboriginals. Phase II would be even larger and more devastating. Environmental groups on both sides of the border joined forces to oppose James Bay, and won a major victory when New York State backed out of a $12.5 billion dollar contract to purchase electricity from Hydro Québec. When Mario Cuomo and Premier Bourassa signed the agreement in 1989, no public hearings were held. Further, Hydro Québec and thirteen multinational corporations involved in the James Bay Project successfully kept the details of their contract secret for almost two years. Other states and entities have since agreed not to buy power generated in the province. The more sanguine Canadian environmentalists have announced the death of the project, but this is premature. An independent Québec, faced with the flight of capital and an unfavorable trade balance, might feel compelled to rush completion of Phase II and offer electricity to its neighbors at prices too low to refuse. Hydro Québec borrowed astronomical sums to pay for Phase I, and may never be able to pay it back. All this reminds one uncomfortably of some destitute African republic, held in economic slavery by New York and Tokyo banks, exporting cheap raw materials while its population starves.

James Bay is only the most conspicuous economic issue that a devolving Canada would have to face. Indian separatism is not so well covered in the press, but it has the potential of amputating territories even greater than Québec. Already the immense northern territory of Nunavut is semi-autonomous, in a vague sort of status that will be increasingly common in a post-sovereign- state world. The Dene people of the Athabaska region (distant relatives of the Navaho), the Haida of the Queen Charlotte Islands (really "Haida Gwaii"), the Lubicon Lake Cree of Alberta, and others are fighting in various ways for self-determination. Even the tiny Stoney Point Nation, an impoverished remnant of the Chippewa, wants to reclaim the army's Camp Ipperwash in Ontario. But the most notorious Indian nationalist movement has emerged among the Mohawks and other Iroquois people along the New York/Québec border. The St. Regis reservation already regards itself as sovereign under the name "Akwesasne." The confrontation between police and Mohawk militants at Oka in 1990 made headlines even in this country. A country club in that Montréal suburb announced plans to expand a golf course into a parcel of land regarded as a sacred burial ground by the Mohawks, though it was not part of their nearby Kahnawake reservation. Shots were fired, people injured; but the media were more interested in the blockade of a bridge used every day by thousands of commuters. The Oka incident was neither the first nor the last campaign in the Mohawk struggle for self-determination. That same summer a less-publicized episode occurred in Alberta. Milton Born With A Tooth, a Peigan Indian whose Lonefighter society attempted to stop construction of a dam in Alberta, was arrested and convicted of threatening Mountie officers with a gun. During his trial the judge compared the Lonefighters with Satanists, and ridiculed the Peigan reverence for the land.

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Native peoples in Canada, better organized than in this country, are represented by the Assembly of First Nations. Earlier this year Ovide Mercredi, a Cree activist and disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, was elected national chief of the Assembly. In a speech to the Montréal Bar Association, printed in *Akwesasne Notes* and acclaimed by native leaders across the continent, Mercredi demanded self-government, official status for Indian languages, and native control of their own schools. "Why do we always have to be placed in the position of having to beg the rest of Canada for the land that once belonged to our ancestors?" he asked. "We have now the dynamics in this country for a new kind of constitution that is based on the collective rights of distinct people." That constitution, evidently, will not be based on the Charlottetown Accord. "We have to move on ourselves," said Mercredi the day after the referendum. "We can't wait for you to catch up with us."

Significantly, most major women's organizations also opposed the plan. The National Action Committee on the Status of Women asked for a women's delegation at the Charlottetown sessions, and called for a "no" vote after the government refused. The Native Women's Association feared that the new constitution, although retaining the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, would offer them no advances. At the other end of the spectrum, reactionary groups claimed that the accord gave too much power to women and ethnic minorities. In between, the accord was supported by business and professional organizations, the banks, and the corporations. A glance at the list of backers and opponents should make it clear that the voters made the right choice. The devolution of Canada will not be easy, but the rest of the world will learn some important do's and don'ts from the process.

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WEATHER REPORT

Just politics

Next time anyone says that the election was proof that progressive politics don't cut it in *real politik,* ask them how come Carol Moseley Braun got more votes than Clinton out in Illinois. Braun was against the death penalty, for a fifty percent cut in the defense budget and favors pot decriminalization.

Term limitations are not likely to produce the wonderful legislatures that proponents claim. On the other hand, they aren't going to do the damage that opponents argue and liberals are causing themselves a lot of unnecessary grief by fighting them. A recent Gallup poll shows term limitations are favored by every age group, blacks and whites, and every region.

If gays are to disrupt military morale and discipline they are going to have to work hard at it to catch up with uniformed heterosexuals who have been doing it for centuries. Venereal disease, divorce, adultery, assault (upon spouses and competitors), as well as a long tradition of regarding sex with women as military invasion by other means are part of the ordinary routine of the defense establishment and do not appear to have unduly impeded it in decimating either other country's populations or our own national budget. In fact, when your editor was an officer in the Coast Guard, one of the legends of that service -- long before the *Autobiography of Malcolm X* -- was an enlisted man named Alex Haley. Haley's unusual skill among his military peers was that he actually knew how to communicate with women and thus made a sizable income by ghost-writing love letters for his crewmates.

Gays will also find themselves in serious competition with booze should they wish to destroy military readiness. Sexual misconduct, of whatever gender or variety, may cause administrative problems, but when you're trying to take a ship out in a full gale on a search and rescue mission with the captain weaving over the radar set pretending he's looking at an X-ray of his feet, you welcome the thought of mere administrative problems.

Gays will likewise be hard-pressed to match the deleterious effect on readiness caused by our defense industry. It is interesting to note that one of those organizing the fight against gays in the military is retired General Minor Roberts, an official of High Frontier, which promotes Star Wars, a program that has weakened our military by several scores of billions of dollars in waste and fraud. It's takes a heap of sexual harassment to equal that.

The truth of the matter is that the military life is hard on love and crude in sex and has little to claim in the way of standards in these matters. In fact, gays in the military (and we're really talking about admitting that gays *are in* the military rather than admitting them *to* the military) have traditionally handled their sexuality with somewhat more comportment than their heterosexual brothers. To argue that this is because of the sanctions imposed against them only suggests that the real cure may be to ban all sex

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in the military. Just the sublimation involved should be enough to win a war or two and if that didn't work, we'd probably discover that we didn't really need those wars anyway.

The Hawaiian Green Party got over 13% in the US Senate race there and elected a candidate to the Hawaii County Council. Eighty Greens ran for national, state and local office in 13 states, getting an average of 16% of the vote. The Libertarians elected four state legislators in New Hampshire, according to *Ballot Access News,* and showed voting strength in Nevada. The Vermont Progressive Coalition elected five members to the legislature and the Alaska Independence Party one. Independents were elected to legislatures in Alaska, Arkansas, California, Mississippi, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and South Carolina.

Earlier this year, an aide to Senator Richard Shelby, an Alabama Democrat, was shot and killed on the streets of DC. Shelby's response was to insist that America's capital colony vote on the death penalty in a referendum. Congress went along. Voters turned down the idea by a two to one margin. This sort of congressional meddling occurs year after year and is one of the reasons why DC needs statehood. Lost in the shuffle and poor media coverage of the last-minute referendum (the elections board was forced to rush to get it on the ballot) was a prime example why a death penalty is a bad idea.

Following the shooting, the police arrested a 17-year-old suspect based on information from informants. The youth was beaten in jail and his family received hate mail. It was while Lloyd Hardy was in jail that Shelby issued his call for the referendum. Then three weeks later, Hardy was released. It turned out that one of the informants had been in prison at the time of the shooting and could not have witnessed the murder.

DC voters also approved the strictest campaign finance measure in the country, again by a two to one margin. Under the initiative, no one could give a candidate for mayor more than $100. Unfortunately, but predictably, the city council and mayor immediately set to finding ways to get around the voters' action.

Drug busts

A sign falsely warning motorists along a stretch of North Carolina interstate to slow down for a non-existent drug checkpoint was used as probable cause to stop and search the cars of drivers who pulled off onto exit ramps prior to the fictional checkpoint. North Carolina police searched only those drivers who took the ramps during the six-hour sting, reports the National Drug Strategy Network, which also notes that Maryland State Police are stopping major commercial buses traveling on Interstate 95, the major north-south thoroughfare, to search for drugs. There were 1,402 stops in 1991.

Education

THE WHITTLE WATCH: According to the Center for the Study of Commercialism, a California judge has refused to shut down the San Jose operation of Channel One. In NJ, the state education commissioner is allowing schools to continue showing the program, despite a judge's ruling that Channel One denied students a "thorough and efficient" education. New York is now the only state that bans the program in public schools.

Old news

You may recall the stories concerning Noriega's alleged satanic practices, part of the big buildup to justify the invasion of Panama. *The Review* was one of the few publications to note the theological basis for Noriega's activities and to report that the Panama chief was far from alone in his liturgical activities. Now a case has found its way to the US Supreme Court involving the sacrifice of goats and chickens by the followers of the Santeria religion in Miami. The *New York Times* reports that there are 70,000 devotees of Santeria in the Miami area alone. There are no signs of US paratroopers headed that way, however.

FIELD NOTES

GROUPS

Insurance Coalition: Some 160 organizations in the Baltimore area have joined to set up a program to sell auto insurance at cost. A feasibility study indicates that the project could save $275 a car in the first year. The coalition has faced intense foot-dragging by the mayor and city council and needs to raise $60,000 in a hurry to complete its R&D. The group is prepared to pay 6% interest. Citywide Insurance Coalition, 2001 N. Hilton St., Baltimore, MD 21216 (410-728-8611)

READING

Bank Failures: Stephen Pizzo has an excellent review of the banking crisis in the Nov/Dec *Mother Jones.* He points out, among other things, that the banking crisis is already upon us: the FDIC went to Congress last year for authority to borrow up to $70 billion. Asked whether the banking industry would be ever able to repay these loans, the US Comptroller, Charles Bowser, said it was unlikely. The bailout has begun. Pizzo also notes that low interest rates have created a favorable 4.3% spread between what banks pay depositors and what they can get on investments. Said one banker: "We're back to the good old 3-6-3 banking formula. 3 percent on deposits, reinvest that money on something paying 6 percent, and we can be on the gold course by 3 PM."

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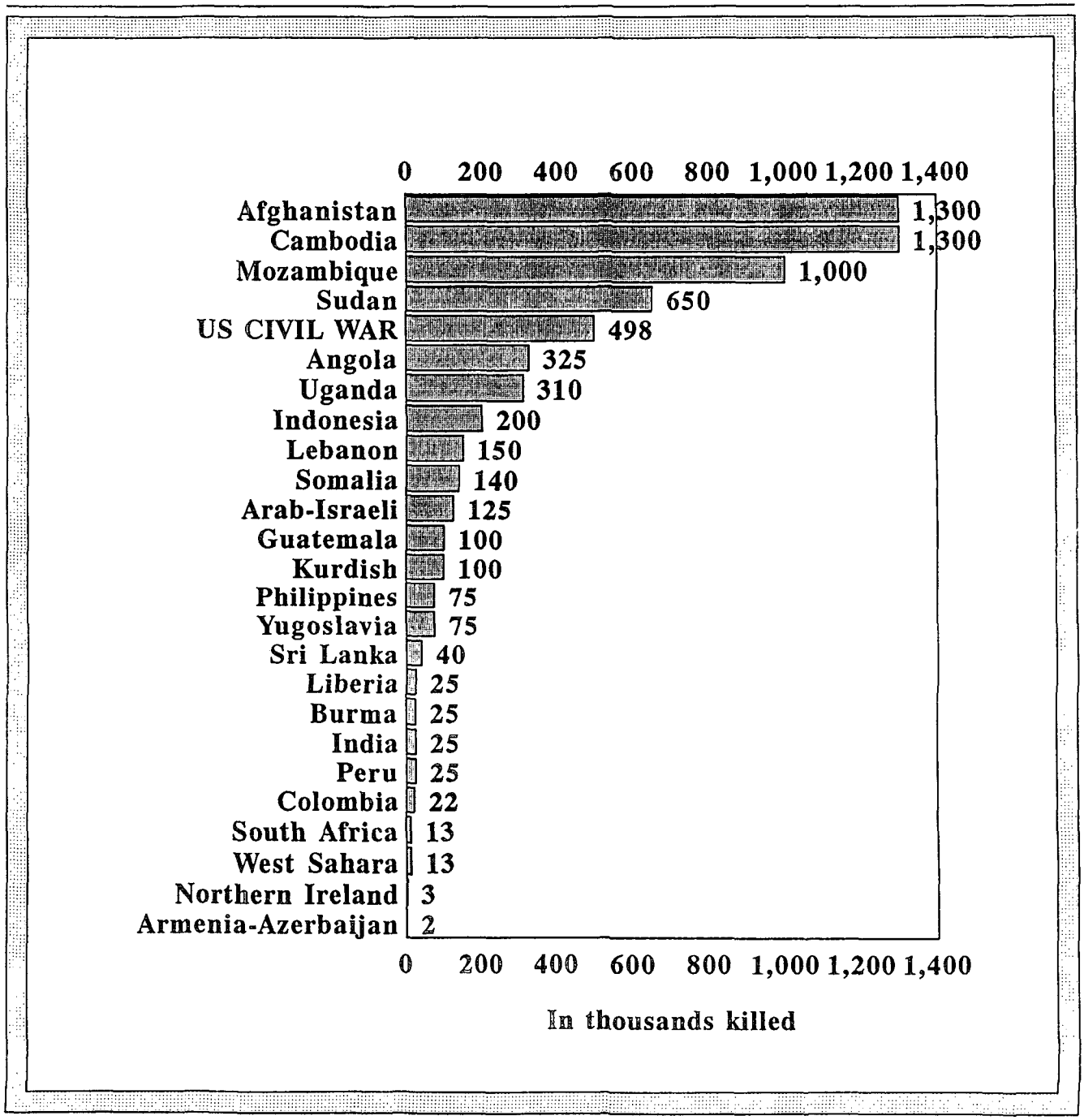
Current Wars

The Death Toll



Source: Center for Defense Information 1992 except where estimates vary, in which case the mean is used. US Civil War included for comparison purposes. Figures do not include deaths from starvation.

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ROADSIGNS

Drugs

Percent of 117 economists surveyed by the *Atlantic Economic Journal* who favor moving towards decriminalization of drugs: 58%

Haiti

Number of private jobs in Haiti prior to US embargo: 252,000

Number of private jobs now: 112,000

Percent of asylum claims approved of those from China: 65%

Percent of asylum claims approved of those from Iran: 64%

Percent of asylum claims approved of those from Vietnam: 34%

Percent of asylum claims approved of those from Cuba: 17%

Percent of asylum claims approved of those from Haiti: 2%

Media

Number of stories found in Nexis database using words *Clinton* and *draft* in two week period following major *LA Times* article on the subject: 292

Number of stories found in Nexis database using the words *Bush* and *Iran-contra* in two weeks following major story on Bush's involvement: 73

NAFTA

Percent of Americans opposing the North American Free Trade Agreement according to a Gallup/CNN/USA Today poll in September: 57%

Politics

Percent of cases, 1984 to present, involving third party rights, ballot access and equal treatment of candidates, in which a US appeals court judge has ruled in favor of these principles, listed by president who appointed them:

Kennedy appointees: 80%
Johnson appointees: 73%
Nixon appointees: 42%
Ford appointees: 50%
Carter appointees: 70%
Reagan appointees: 32%
Bush appointees: 14%

Race

Increased chance of denial of a mortgage to a minority applicant in the Boston area (after accounting for any credit problems), compared to the chance of denial of a white applicant: 60%

SOURCES:

HAITI: Cato Institute; POLITICS: FAIR, Ballot Access News. RACE: Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

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